

# Our Stories

WINTER NEWSLETTER 2021



## inside

2

### **CEO Message**

Finding light in the darkest of days, although difficult at times, is essential for the work we do for those who are struggling.

4

### **Our Family**

The one word that has followed Tony around for his entire life is 'Trouble'.

6

### **Your Impact**

More than 20,000 donations from individuals in 2020 helped hundreds of people affected by the triple pandemic (COVID, opioid crisis, and economic downturn)

7

### **Our Donors**

"I grew up with very limited means. I understand the limited opportunities that a life like that can offer," says Justin Young, co-owner of the Hillside Avenue Canadian Tire franchise.



Hope and Belonging

We thank Mail-O-Matic for donating resources to print this colour newsletter

## Chief Executive Officer's Message

**Finding light in the darkest of days, although difficult at times, is essential for the work we do for those who are struggling.**

As Our Place staff grieves the recent loss of several long-time family members, we are reminded of why we keep fighting to improve the lives of those cast aside by addiction, poverty and happenstance.

It wasn't COVID that claimed these lives; neither was it addiction. It was a life of daily struggle that aged their bodies until the shells simply shut down. Their souls, however, remain with us as a reminder that Our Place was one of the few places where they felt a sense of belonging.

COVID has challenged us in unexpected ways, but it has also ignited a fire in the government to open its eyes and see the hurt and pain that so many people experience when they are forced to live without the security of a home.

Our Place staff have stepped up like never before as government agencies turn to us to help explore every avenue to bring people indoors.

And that is the light.

Through the shelters we have opened and the leased hotels we manage, Our Place is housing over 400 people. Last year at this time, we housed less than a third of that.

And with this housing comes great opportunity for change. Imagine camping



in this wet weather and high winds, and then being offered a private room of your own with a hot shower, nutritious meals, access to laundry, a library, and more.

The change we see in people, the reignition of that inner light, is palpable.

Once people stabilize, and their thoughts are no longer on pure survival, we take it even further. Some people move in to permanent housing through rent subsidies; others find work through Our WorkPlace placements; and some decide they are ready for detox and recovery at New Roads.

We still have a lot of hurdles to overcome, especially when it comes to how we treat mental illness, but we are shining the signal into the night sky and people are taking notice.

With much gratitude,

**Julian Daly**  
Chief Executive Officer



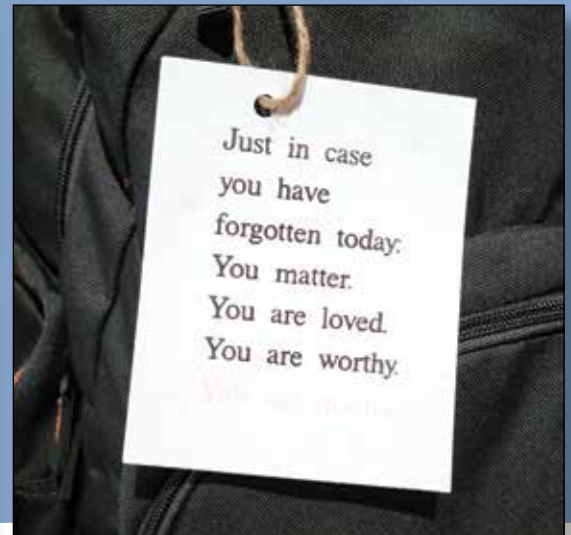
## THANK YOU!

**WE CAN'T DO IT WITHOUT YOU.** We are truly grateful to everyone who contributes to Our Place. We appreciate the care and compassion shown by donations of time, talent and money that benefit our family members. The many programs and services offered are only possible with the generosity of Our Place volunteers and supporters like you. Thank you!





# Hope & Belonging at Our Place



EXTRA STEP: Even during a time of pandemic, Our Place staff and donors go that extra step to make sure the vulnerable people we serve are kept safe, well fed, and offered a glimmer of hope for the future.

# Our Family

## Tony's Story

**“I never missed out on love. It's just you realize there's something . . . that's not there.”**

**The one word that has followed Tony around for his entire life is 'Trouble'.**

He doesn't know if his birth parents loved him — or even wanted him. He only knows that he was given up for adoption at 2½ years old. That abandonment by his birth family has ingrained in him that even at such a young age, he was too much to handle.

“I was a bit of a problem child,” he says. “Acting out at a young age, temper tantrums, things like that.”

To this day, Tony — who is about to celebrate his 53rd birthday — has never had any contact with his birth mother or father.

Shortly after being adopted by a white family with three older girls, Tony and a newly-adopted younger brother of only six months moved from Toronto to North Vancouver.

The nurse who was involved in his adoption became his godmother and they are still in contact to this day.

“I never missed out on love,” he says of his adoptive family. “It's just you realize there's something . . . that's not there.”

Despite the warmth and acceptance of his new family, Tony continued to struggle with impulse control and anger — two traits that

would come to define his life.

“I went through a lot of schools because of my behaviour,” he says. “My mum took me to doctors and psychiatrists. They all had different theories about why my behaviour was so erratic all the time. They put me on special diets, no preservatives, no sugar, but it never seemed to help.”

School was terrible for Tony, despite being clever enough that he skipped from Grade 6 to Grade 8, and then bypassed Grade 9 to Grade 10. Unfortunately, skipping grades meant Tony was the youngest in class. And when he was picked on, he fought back.

“I was kicked out of seven or eight different high schools for fighting or being aggressive. It just got out of control.”

Tony ended up leaving school at 14, and his aggression also damaged his home life. He was placed in foster homes and group homes, but became a constant runaway.

“The homes couldn't cope with me,” he says.

Tony was placed on income assistance at 15. “They gave me a cheque and said ‘okay, now you're on your own.’”

Back on the streets, Tony started hanging out with a “pretty rough group of people” and it wasn't long before he was doing “most of the things you do on the street to survive,” which included committing

## BECOME A MONTHLY DONOR



JOIN OUR CIRCLE OF LOVE  
PROGRAM TODAY

Why not join the many donors who have chosen to give monthly? This eco-friendly method ensures the money saved on printing and mailing goes directly to providing food and services for people in need. Plus, you get more control over your giving because you can cancel or alter your gift at any time. And, we'll send you one receipt for your annual donation in time for filing your tax return. Interested? Please call our philanthropy team at 250-940-5060 or visit [ourplacesociety.com/donate/monthly](https://ourplacesociety.com/donate/monthly) to sign up.





serious crimes and taking hard drugs. He was first incarcerated at 16. Then, at 17, he was charged with murder after confronting a man he says had raped and mutilated a friend. The man pulled a gun and Tony struck him in the throat, resulting in death.

Tony was sentenced to Life-10, which meant he was only eligible for parole after serving 10 years. After serving nine years, however, Tony was charged with attempted murder of a fellow inmate. He received an additional six years.

After two years in the SHU, Canada's highest security prison, Tony was transferred to Donnacona, a maximum-security prison with a different vision of prisoner reform.

"Compared to where I had been, it was heaven," he says. "It gave me focus."

Tony began to get serious about drawing, even selling his art to fellow inmates. But then a cellmate told him the tattoo artists

were making "three or four times" more off his drawings than he was. So Tony went to a tattooist who only had five months left in his sentence and struck a deal. Tony would provide the artwork if the tattooist taught him how to do tattoos.

Suddenly, Tony was building relationships and finding a new purpose in life. "My work started to be known."

Tony's anger issues, however, had never been resolved, and a confrontation with an inmate sent him back to the SHU.

Upon his return to the Super-Max, a psychologist took an interest and decided to send Tony to a psychiatric hospital for an assessment. It was there that he was finally diagnosed with both Bipolar and Schizoaffective disorder.

With proper medication and a two-year hospital stay, Tony's life began to change.

**"They saved my life,"** he says. **"My behaviour**

**changed. I was able to cope and reason properly. Since that time, I haven't had one physical altercation with anybody."**

Tony made it down to a minimum security prison, and six months ago, he was released to a half-way house after serving 35 years.

"Nobody ever thought I would get out of prison," he says.

While looking for work, Tony spotted the Our WorkPlace sign — Our Place's work placement program — and went in to see what it was all about.

Our Place just happened to be looking for a new member of its custodial team, and Tony quickly snatched it up.

Coming up on his three-month work anniversary, Tony is thinking about the future for the very first time.



< **FESTIVE FOGGERS** - The lovely elves of Origen Clean, a Victoria-based health-tech startup, donated their time and expertise to help us increase safety and wellness during these difficult times.

**FOG THE HALLS**

WITH ORIGIN CLEAN!



## Your Impact

February is a month to reflect on the love in our lives. More than 20,000 donations from individuals in 2020 helped hundreds of people affected by the triple pandemic (COVID, opioid crisis, and economic downturn). Generous donors ensured that those experiencing some of the toughest times in our community were able to receive a warm welcome, food, shelter, access to showers, clean clothes, use of our computer lab, job search support services and a listening ear. Dozens more are in healing treatment at our New Roads Therapeutic Recovery Community. **THANK YOU ALL.**



## VOLUNTEERING AT OUR PLACE

OUR PLACE VOLUNTEERS ARE THE SNAP/CRACKLE IN OUR POP

THANK YOU TO ALL OUR AMAZING VOLUNTEERS advocating from home or active in service, adhering to safety protocols yet supporting Our Place Society in many creative ways! We appreciate your care and all you do. At this time, we are reengaging and placing already registered volunteers in needed roles. For updates please visit our website at: [www.ourplacesociety.com/volunteer](http://www.ourplacesociety.com/volunteer)



JUSTIN AND SHELLEY YOUNG

## Our Donors

### Justin Young doesn't take success for granted.

"I grew up with very limited means. I understand the limited opportunities that a life like that can offer," he says.

Now a business and community leader, Justin, together with his wife Shelley, are in a position to give back to their community. The owners of the **Hillside Avenue Canadian Tire** franchise make decisions every day on ways they can make a difference to the lives of others who face significant challenges.

The Youngs formed a staff-management committee to review requests and make recommendations of vital programs and services that make a significant impact.

"We support Our Place, not just because they treat our most vulnerable citizens, but because they offer programs that have the capability to enrich and enhance lives," he says.

Justin points to the **Our Workplace**

employment program and **New Roads Therapeutic Recovery Community** as initiatives that provide people the opportunity to grow and one day give back to others — just as Justin is able to do.

Within a week of Our Place announcing its fundraising campaign to feed people outdoors during COVID, Justin and Shelley donated the costs for a day of meals, and repeated that donation a month later. They have also just recently committed sponsorship for Our Place's upcoming 7th annual **Hungry Hearts** fundraiser in September.

The money raised from that event will go directly to Our Place's health and safety campaign, which provides access to paramedic outreach workers, medical supplies and other vital resources, critical in supporting those facing poverty and homelessness.

"By supporting our local charities, we are investing back into the region," says Young. "I truly believe that our success is tied closely to the success of those who shop in our store. They know their money stays in our community, and together we can do so much good!"



## Things We Need

- **MEN'S PANTS  
SIZES 32 TO 38**
- **MALE & FEMALE  
UNDERWEAR**
- **SHOES**
- **GLOVES**
- **HATS**
- **SCARVES**
- **TOQUES**
- **BLANKETS**
- **SLEEPING BAGS**
- **NAIL CLIPPERS**
- **TOILETRIES**
- **RAIN GEAR**
- **WINTER JACKETS**

**CALL 250-388-7112  
(EXT 287)**

## LEGACY OF LOVE

A PLANNED GIFT  
CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN

IF THERE WAS A WAY TO END POVERTY TODAY or prevent addictions or forms of abuse, we would. We definitely try. But until miracles become more commonplace — with the help of donors — our work continues.

For more information on establishing your legacy at Our Place, please contact Marg Rose at 250-940-5067 or by email: [margr@ourplacesociety.com](mailto:margr@ourplacesociety.com).



## Great Grants

# It takes a village

**T**hank you to the 20,200 gifts from individual donors too numerous to mention, and to the following foundations, government departments and organizations for significant grants in support of Our Place programs and services in 2020.

- 100+ Women Who Care Saanich Peninsula
- ALACS Fund through the Victoria Foundation
- Alistair S. Thomson Fund through the Victoria Foundation
- BC Gaming
- BC Addictions and Mental Health
- BC Housing
- Canadian Red Cross
- Capital Regional District
- Carole and Clint Forster
- City of Victoria
- Island Health
- Jaymac Fund through the Victoria Foundation
- Lobstick Foundation
- Lotte & John Hecht Memorial Foundation
- McLean Foundation
- Provincial Employees Community Services Fund
- RBC Foundation
- Rapid Relief Fund
- Rotary Club of Oak Bay
- Shaw Family Foundation
- Services Canada: New Horizons for Seniors Program
- South Island Farmhub
- Telus Corporation Friendly Futures Foundation
- Times Colonist Literacy Society
- TD Charitable Foundation
- United Church Gifts with Vision
- United Church of Canada Foundation
- United Church Pacific Mountain Region
- United Way Greater Victoria
- Vancouver Foundation
- Victoria Foundation – Community Grant

Our Place Society gratefully acknowledges the

**City of Victoria**

For support of this

**Safe Storage Facility**

## Our Place

# Coldest Night



**TAKE A BIG STEP FOR OUR NEIGHBOURS IN NEED** This year, Coldest Night of the Year will be a virtual, family friendly walk that raises awareness and money for charities serving hungry, homeless, and hurting people in our community. Fundraise, promote and walk in your neighbourhood on Feb. 20. Learn more and sign up to walk at [ourplacesociety.com/walk](http://ourplacesociety.com/walk)

## Out of the Cold

The need to open our Drop-In floor and Nutrition Bar into the evening will add over \$200,000 to our annual budget. To make this possible, we need your help to keep vulnerable people warm, safe and fed during the cold, wet months ahead. If you can help with a financial donation, please visit the website or call:

**250-940-5060**

 **ourplace**  
**Hope and Belonging**

Our Place Society  
919 Pandora Avenue  
Victoria, B.C. V8V 3P4  
250-388-7112  
[donors@ourplacesociety.com](mailto:donors@ourplacesociety.com)

Join the conversation online!  
**Facebook** [facebook.com/ourplacesociety](https://facebook.com/ourplacesociety)  
**Twitter** [twitter.com/ourplacesociety](https://twitter.com/ourplacesociety)  
Registered Canadian Charity  
# 82709 8344 RR0001

Visit our website: [ourplacesociety.com](http://ourplacesociety.com)